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# A Titillating—and Serious—Look at Foreign Policy

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WASHINGTON — President Reagan's foreign-policy team is in a slump. A U.S. peace initiative lies comatose in the Middle East. Political and military tensions spiral steadily upward in Central America. Arms-control agreements are a dim dream.

Worst of all, there's a dearth of ideas about how to solve any of those problems.

This is a good time, in short, for a critical look at why the American foreign policy machinery so frequently sputters, misfires and generally fails to produce. Zbigniew Brzezinski, the self-assured national security adviser under President Carter, offers us a few clues in his memoirs, "Power and Principle" (Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 587 pages, \$22.50).

Mr. Brzezinski was involved in more than a little foreign-policy sputtering and misfiring in his four years in the White House. The Carter years were a time of stunning foreign-policy successes—Camp David, normalization of relations with China—as well as miserable defeats—loss of Iran, the humiliating hostage crisis.

Mr. Brzezinski recounts these successes and setbacks in meticulous detail. But the broader lesson from his book lies elsewhere.

His memoirs are vivid evidence that American presidents simply can't decide what to do with their national security advisers. President Carter vacillated, sometimes wanting Mr. Brzezinski to be a highly visible grand architect of foreign policy, at other times a quiet coordinator.

One result was that for four years the Carter administration failed to come to grips with the single most important foreign-policy issue: relations with the Soviet Union.

For the first two years, the administration basically followed the less confrontational approach advocated by Secretary of State Cyrus Vance. For the last two years, it followed the more competitive path Mr. Brzezinski considers inevitable.

The lesson of that experience is important, for President Reagan also has had his problems figuring out what to do with a na-

tional security adviser. The president's trouble defining the job, in fact, probably helps explain the current sag in foreign-policy initiatives.

In Washington, the early reaction to the Brzezinski book doesn't focus much on such broad issues. As might be expected, the capital instead is titillating over the juicy tidbits Mr. Brzezinski offers about the personalities he saw up close. He shows us Walter Mondale and the "loving way he would comb his hair" before an office mirror; Helmut Schmidt in his elevator shoes; Jimmy Carter coming to his first meeting with the new British foreign secretary wearing blue jeans and jogging shoes because it was Saturday.

This is all wonderfully readable stuff, and it separates this book from President Carter's bland memoirs. But once the titillation over these little revelations dies away, the book should be studied for what it says about American foreign-policy machinery.

The State Department is the traditional province for making foreign policy. But Mr. Brzezinski makes a defensible argument that the State Department alone simply isn't adequate for dealing with today's complicated foreign-policy issues. Increasingly, these aren't just diplomatic matters but broader national-security issues that require expertise from the Defense Department and Central Intelligence Agency. Somebody has to coordinate.

Beyond that problem, presidents lately have tended to view the State Department as a massive bureaucracy that pursues its own agenda rather than the president's policies. "Secretaries of State only too often (especially with the passage of time), and their State Department professionals almost always, tend to confuse diplomacy with foreign policy," Mr. Brzezinski writes. "What they forget is that diplomacy is a technique for promoting national objectives abroad and not an end in itself."

And finally, both President Carter and Mr. Brzezinski had another complaint about the State Department: It simply doesn't produce very many new ideas.

Enter Zbigniew Brzezinski to coordinate, ride herd on the State Department and generate ideas. This approach produced a notably activist foreign policy, but one marred with confusing signals and differences between the State Department professionals and the White House.

Mr. Brzezinski was itching for normalization with China; the State Department, fearful of upsetting Soviet arms negotiators, didn't want to hurry. Mr. Brzezinski simply seized the issue and achieved normalization.

Mr. Brzezinski sought to play up Soviet meddling in the Horn of Africa; the State Department, considering unrest there largely a local issue, sought to play it down. On one memorable occasion, Mr. Brzezinski and President Carter told reporters there was "linkage" between events in the Horn of Africa and progress in arms talks. Meanwhile, Mr. Vance was busy assuring the Senate Foreign Relations Committee there wasn't any linkage.

The Reagan administration hasn't done much better coming to grips with the dilemma of how to use the national security adviser. The president started with Richard Allen, who disappeared from view in the job and failed to stop incessant feuding between the State and Defense departments.

Now the job belongs to William Clark, who hasn't any extensive foreign-policy experience or particularly strong views, save for deep conservatism. The combination of Mr. Clark and low-keyed George Shultz at the State Department doesn't give a blustery president much diplomatic imagination to back up his vague policy outlines.

Mr. Brzezinski suggests upgrading the status of the national security adviser and making him subject to Senate confirmation. The change would signal that foreign-policy and national-security leadership would come principally from the White House. Another route would be to reinvigorate the job of Secretary of State, making clear its holder is both head of a department and the president's top personal adviser in the field. Either way, the evidence suggests some clearer lines are called for.

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